**Vice (upper-level undergraduate class)**

**Instructor:** Prof. Wenjin Liu

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**Time/Location:** TBD

**Office Hours:** TH 3-5pm, or by appointment

**Course Description**

We often blame individuals and groups for being vicious. For example, we call a president who fled from his country at the face of an underequipped insurgent group a coward; we rebuke anti-vaxxers with ignorance; we criticize a country that suppresses its citizens’ nonviolent protests for being ruthless. But what, on the earth, is vice? What makes individuals or groups vicious? What are the fundamental kinds or classes of vice? Is there any deeper connection among different kinds of vices?

In this class, we explore answers to those questions in an cross-cultural, interdisciplinary approach. In the first half of the semester, we inquire into how vice has been discussed in different cultural, historical, and intellectual traditions: the ancient Greek tragedy and philosophy, Christianity, classical Chinese philosophy, Indian Buddhism, and feminist philosophy. In the second half of the semester, we turn to discussions on vice in contemporary analytic philosophy and political theory by focusing on three main sub-classes of vice: moral vice, epistemic vice, and political vice. In the last meeting of the class, we have a mini-conference, where each of us give a 15-minute presentation on the final paper and then have 15-minute Q&A sessions to answer questions from the audience.

**Course Objective**

Students will acquire a rich understanding of vice, a topic that has just begun to be studied systematically in the analytic philosophy, through careful reflection on relevant discussions from different cultural, historical, and intellectual traditions. Students will develop skill in the close textual analysis of historical work and build their abilities in philosophical writing through regular short writing exercises, revisions, and outlining. Students will also think critically about what kind of flaws that they and their communities suffer from or are liable to fall preys to, and about what could be done to correct or prevent those flaws. This course aims to change your life for the better, at least a little bit!

**Required Student Resources**

You are required to purchase or borrow the following books for this course.

Qassim Cassam, *Vices of the Mind* (Oxford 2019).

Kate Manne, *Down Girl: The Logic of Misogyny* (Oxford, 2018).

Judith N. Shklar, *Ordinary Vices* (Cambridge 1984).

Please be sure to get physical rather than electronic copies of these texts. Note that it is important that we use the same editions/translations (otherwise, we’ll have to spend a lot of time trying to coordinate references). Additional readings will be posted on this course’s Canvas site. You must print these readings out and bring them to class.

**Electronics Policy**

Laptops and tablets (provided the latter can function as a computer) are welcome and even encouraged in class so that we can better work together on activities and readings. Phones, however, are not permitted.  Learning how to resist our phones is a challenge. Everyone should silence and stow their phones for the duration of class. When you surreptitiously use your phone on your lap, flat on the desk, or furtively in your bag, both I and your classmates can see what you’re doing -- it distracts all of us and will result in gentle (and if it is necessary repeatedly stern) admonishment. Failure to abide by this policy will lower your participation grade.

**Assignments**

The assignments for this course are designed with three principle objectives in mind. First, they will give you the chance to clarify your understanding of positions of the philosophical text, and to develop your own ideas. Second, they will provide the opportunity to work on key skills for philosophical writing. And third, they will help you hone your oral presentation skills.

The first component of the class assignments consists of weekly summaries of the readings. In this assignment, you are expected to reconstruct one of the main arguments from the readings that we will discuss in the coming weeks and to raise at least two preliminary challenges to the argument. You must post your weekly summary in the blog section of the course Canvas site by Sunday 11:59pm. Throughout the semester, you need to submit at least nine summaries. You are encouraged to read and comment on your classmates’ summaries. In this way, you can not only learn from one another and but also practice articulating your ideas.

The second component of the class assignments consists of two 1000-1500 words short essays. You are expected to write a response to one of the prompts that I post on the course website one week before the deadline. These papers are due by 11:59pm on Sept 26th and Oct 31st.

The third component of the class assignments is a 3000-3500 words final paper. You could either respond to one of the prompt questions that I post on the Canvas site or write a research paper on a topic that we discuss in class. This paper is due by 5pm on Dec 12th.

The fourth and final component of the class assignments is a 15-20 minute group presentation on the last day of class A presentation should be accompanied by a handout, a draft of which must be submitted to me the day before the class meets, at 5pm on Sunday.

**Course Grade Breakdown**

Weekly summaries --- 20% Final Paper --- 40% (outline 15%; final draft 25%)

Short papers --- 20 % Presentation --- 10 %

Participation --- 10%

**Late Policy**

Late days are intended to help you through an especially busy week, a cold, and other issues that may crop up during the semester. Each late day allows you to submit an assignment up to twenty-four hours later than the official deadline without penalty. During the semester, you have three free late days. You can use a late day, or multiple late days, *whenever you like*. You do not need to provide a reason, but you mustlet me know that this is what you intend to do. Once you have used up your late days, though, all lateness will not be excused unless you are confronted unusual physical, mental, or personal challenges and are able to submit a note that testifies to your situation from your doctor, counselor, or college advisor before the deadline. Unexcused late submission will be penalized 1/3 of a grade per day, including weekends.

**Collaboration and Academic Integrity**

Collaboration is an important component of philosophy. I encourage you to discuss your ideas with your classmates, your friends, your roommates, your professors, your family members, etc. That being said, you should cite all your sources carefully and make sure that the written works that you submit are your own. When one uses someone else’s words and ideas--whether it’s the work of a famous writer or a fellow student--without crediting the source or authorship of those words and ideas, one is plagiarizing. This course has a zero-tolerance policy for plagiarism---all violations will result in substantial grade penalties. If you have any doubts or questions about what constitutes academic misconduct, please do not hesitate to contact me.

**Accessibility Statement**

It is my goal to create an inclusive, accessible learning environment that meets the needs of all students. If you anticipate or experience any barriers to learning in this course, please feel welcome to discuss your concerns with me. If you have a disability, or think you may have a disability, you may also want to contact the Office of Disability Services ( <https://ods.princeton.edu> or 609-258-8840) for more information or an official accommodation.

**Code of Academic Conduct**

The honor code, or the Code of Academic Conduct, applies to all undergraduate students, full-time and part-time, in Princeton University. Princeton University expects and requires behavior compatible with its high standards of scholarship. By accepting admission to the university, a student accepts its regulations and acknowledges the right of the university to take disciplinary action, including suspension or expulsion, for conduct judged unsatisfactory or disruptive.

**What you can expect from me**

I will be available at least 2 hours per week for office hours, and I will return all substantive written assignments within a week after I receive them from you. While I will not read the whole drafts of your papers before you turn them in officially, I will be happy to read outlines and discuss philosophical ideas with you during my office hours.

**Schedule and Readings**

**Week 1 Vice and Fate in the Greek tragedy**

Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound*

Sophocles, *Oedipus Rex*

**Week 2 Vice in ancient Greek philosophy**

Plato, *Protagoras*, *Republic*

Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics Books ii-iii, vii.

**Week 3 Sins in Christianity**

Aquinas, A Treatise on Theology

**Week 4 Vice in classical Chinese philosophy**

Confucius, Analects

Laozi, Tao Te Ching

**Week 5 Vice in Indian Buddhism**

Shantarakshita, The Ornament of the Middle Way

**Week 6 The Feminist Perspective**

Kate Manne, Down Girl

Sally Haslanger, *Resisting Reality: Social Construction and Social Critique*

**Week 7 Moral Vices (1)**

Judith N. Shklar, *Ordinary Vices*

**Week 8 Moral Vices (2)**

Phillipa Foot, *Virtues and Vices: and Other Essays in Moral Philosophy*. Ch. 1, 11.

**Week 9 Epistemic Vices (1)**

Qassim Cassam, *Vices of the Mind*

**Week 10 Epistemic Vices (2)**

Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*

**Week 11 Political Vices (1)**

Mark E. Button, *Political Vices*

**Week 12 Political Vices (2)**

Kwame Anthony Appiah, ‘Racism’, in D. T. Goldberg (ed.), Anatomy of Racism,

(Minnesota, 1990).

Tommie Shelby, ‘Is Racism in the “Heart”?’ Journal of Social Philosophy, 33 (2002), 411-20.

**Week 13 Mini-conference**